THE UNITARIAN CALENDAR

SWIFTLY AROSE AND SPREAD AROUND
ME THE PEACE AND KNOWLEDGE
THAT PASS ALL THE ARGUMENT OF THE
WORLD,
AND I KNOW THAT THE HAND OF GOD
IS THE PROMISE OF MY OWN,
AND I KNOW THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD
IS THE BROTHER OF MY OWN,
AND THAT ALL THE MEN THAT EVER
WERE BORN ARE MY BROTHERS, AND
THE WOMEN MY SISTERS,
AND THAT A KELSON OF THE CREATION
IS LOVE.

—WHITMAN

Vol. 1 DECEMBER — 1908 No. 3

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, BOSTON

The Unitarian Calendar

Vol. 1 DECEMBER, 1908 No. 3

THE PARAGRAPHER

The Unitarian church takes little interest in celestialism, finding enough to occupy its attention in the terrestrial common. It is not looking for salvation so much as for opportunity for service. It makes character the essential product of religion, and endeavors to give the soul all possible chance to save itself from impotency and imperfection. It regards the present as the only time worthy of consideration, and teaches that the right use of the present will best guarantee the good and gain of the future. What the future will be depends entirely upon the wisdom and energy we apply to the present.

Jesus did not come into the world that he might die for it. His mission was one of life, and not of death. His dying was but the natural and inevitable sequence of his living. His mission was but the mission of us all,—the living of the noblest and highest life of which he was capable. This he did, and did so well, that he has gained the admiration and adoration of mankind. He has stimulated all men who have heard of him to higher endeavor. He has shown how large and splendid a human life may be when it is wholly given to the service of God and man. And this mission is yours as well.

You are the son of God. When you address Him as "Father," it is not in any figurative sense. It is the expression of a fact. It expresses the greatest fact of your life and experience. You are not a fallen, sin-soiled creature, dependent upon the favor of the Creator for admission into the circle of the saved. You are a child of God, heir to the highest, and having clear claim to the wealth of the infinite. What most you need to do is to assert your right. Put forth your power! Rise to the full height of your divine stature!

To believe in Jesus as deity, as very God, is to hopelessly shut oneself off from the inspiring influence of his splendid life. If he were God, what chance have we as human beings to emulate his example? With Jesus the God we can have nothing to do. He can be neither a comrade nor a leader. The limitations of the human effectually block our endeavor. But to believe in Jesus as a man like ourselves is to be given the inspiring knowledge that what he did we can do, and what he achieved, we can achieve. Is there no helpful impulse in the thought?

The world needs a religion of kindness. It has been finely stated:

> "So many gods, so many creeds,
> So many paths that wind and wind,
> While just the art of being kind
> Is all this sad world needs."

The best kind of religion is the religion of being kind. One's form of faith is worth nothing if it does not inspire one to deeds of kindness. The sap of sentiment becomes of value only when it is boiled down to the syrup of sympathy or the sugar of service. If you are kinder than I am, your religion, whatever it may be, is better than mine.

You rob every great artist of his honor when you declare that his work is the result of supernatural powers, and not the result of his own human skill. And similarly you rob Jesus of his chief honor when you declare that the deeds he wrought were done because of his possession of infinite and superhuman power. It was no honor for God to do what Jesus did. It was honor supreme for Jesus as a man to have done what he did, with all the limitations of a human life. It is only by viewing him thus, that the marvel and excellence of his splendid achievements become manifest.

If there is one truth that Christmas reveals, it is that of the inherent goodness of mankind. Once a year the kindlier nature of men becomes revealed under the spell and impulse of the Christmas spirit. The real man, who has been masquerading for eleven months under the guise of the mercenary and selfish, flings off his mask and appears as the man of heart he really is. In the cold hand of business we detect the pulsebeat, and know that still there is the life of love. This is the revelation of Christmas.

Science and religion are not in the least antagonistic. Once they were so considered by the church, believing, as it did, in a supernatural basis of revelation. The Unitarian church, however, stands for a religious philosophy that is in fullest accord with the principles and basis of science. It is willing to submit religion to the closest possible scrutiny and investigation. If religion is so artificial and unreal that it has anything to fear from the research of the honest human mind, it is hardly worth one's loyalty at all. Only insofar as religion is able to withstand all doubt can it approve itself to the modern mind.

When a great artist paints a picture and some amateur copies it and another copies the copy, and on my being shown the last product, I refuse to accept it as a thing of worth and beauty, do I necessarily reject the great artist, or lack in appreciation of his work and worth? And when some theologian of long ago formed a certain conception of the man Jesus, and other theologians formed their conception into a creed, and I reject the creed, do you actually mean to say that I reject the man Jesus, or lack in appreciation of his work and worth?

The Unitarian church does not profess to preach any new theology. It finds its task largely in the re-affirmation of the theology of Jesus. It accepts his belief regarding God as one worthy of modern acceptance—that God is our Father, and that He loves and leads every human child. This is the essence of the Unitarian theology, just as it was the essence of the teaching of Jesus. If it rejects the prevalent theology of the Christian church to-day, it is only because that theology is not consistent with the principles proclaimed by Jesus. The best in the "new theology" is but the true in the old.

An unprejudiced study of the record of the life of Christ shows that his purpose was the revelation of the love of God as the Father of all men. To declare that he came merely to yield up his life upon Calvary as a sacrifice for the sins of the world is to degrade the high office he filled in his life. It was his life that counted and not his death. His purpose was to live so strong and pure and true a life that mankind could realize the grandeur and the greatness of its own inherent worth. His purpose was to show both the power and the purity of the human soul.

THE UNITARIAN SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTMAS

[Written for the Unitarian Calendar]

The liberal significance of Christmas lies in the fact that the human may be made divine. Christmas turns our thoughts to a life that showed itself divine. No matter about its birth; it grew in favor with God and man until all cried out, "Lo, the Son of God!"

Christmas is the time of love, joy, good-will. Even a Scrooge yields to its spirit; it overruns the hearts of men. Say we not, "This is the power of God? This is the spirit that made Jesus divine?" Why not, at once and forever, recognize love, good-will, loyalty, as *divine powers?* The fruit of their presence in the heart to-day is the same as centuries ago. He who loveth is born of God and knoweth God. Love, brethren! Give, take, forgive, rejoice! Let the Christ and the Christmas in! Prove that wherever the spirit of all-love enters, we are divine together. Ring, bells, ring!

— *Charles P. Wellman.*

At no time during the whole year are so many hearts beating in sympathy as at this Christmas season. How pleasant the thought of the merry gatherings in countless happy homes, of the delight of the children, the mutual surprises, the innumerable proofs of thoughtful remembrance, which the season brings. How beautiful are the charities which convey to so many of the poor and unfortunate tokens of the interest and sympathy of their more prosperous neighbors. And for once the voice of sectarian controversy is dumb. Churches of every name are united by a common sentiment of gratitude for the event which all commemorate. It is a splendid tribute, even though Jesus' name may not be always borne in mind, to the truth and

beauty of his gospel of peace and good-will; an evidence of the existence, in the midst of the selfishness of the world, of generous and kindly feelings; a foretaste and prophecy of the time when human brotherhood shall be something more than a mere name; when all, from the least to the greatest, shall know the Father of light and love and enter into his joy.

— *William H. Fish.*

We celebrate Christmas as the birthday of the great man of peace and good-will in whom God was incarnated, for God is love. Despite all stress and strain of the season, the Christmas-tide brings us afresh what is deepest, most sacred, and most enduring in life. Not only does the Christmas spirit give us a clearer vision of the value of peace on earth and good-will to men, but it helps us to see that each year there are more men and women of good-will who find peace. There can be no greater gift to man than this spirit. Listening to the angels' song, our lives are freshened, the mystic circle of brotherhood is enlarged, and good-will is a stronger force in daily life.

— *Charles A. Place.*

Christmas is the celebration of the spirit of good-will. For is not that the secret of Jesus? "How does it happen," we ask, "that this Jewish youth, after nineteen centuries have come and gone, still points the way to a higher civilization? How does it happen that we find his words so true, his way the noblest and best?"

The secret of personality is always beyond our ken. But Jesus' life is so transparent, his method so direct, that we can understand that life much better than many a lesser one. He has one great law of life to which all questions are submitted. It is the law of love, of brotherhood, of good-will. For

Jesus, this law of good-will was absolute. He followed it unflinchingly, and that is why he was never wrong in dealing with the great fundamental facts of life.

But this good-will he knew was not simply in his heart, — it was at the heart of the world. God is the great Good-Will. He is our Father. As the color of the rose is only the transformed beauty of the sunlight, so the love in human faces tells of that Love from which it comes. Jesus believed this and he made others believe it. In that belief, he crowned his teaching with a strength and comfort which the world forever needs. For if the Power that broods above my life is really beneficent, if my mother's love is only a reflection of that beneficence, if all the friendships I have known are but witnesses to that Greater Friend in whose keeping is my life, then all fear dies from out the heart and gratitude and peace come to take its place.

— *Leon A. Harvey.*

Our liberal view of Christmas is that it is a human and natural institution, born out of the best and most generous sentiments of the human heart. It is a natural human festival in which has been absorbed many of the happy, joyous heart festivals of the ancient world. Jesus, the lover of humanity, Jesus the joy-bringer, has, by a law of natural selection, absorbed all that is best in the great human festivals of the past, and they have all been merged in the celebration of the birthday of the founder of Christianity.

We of the liberal faith delight in this larger Christmas. We claim it not as the product of Christianity alone, but as the rich flowering and fruitage of all the religions of the past, the rich achievement of all that is best in our civilization. The key note of Christmas is refined and consecrated human joy; so Christmas was born in the

first ripple of laughter that broke through the gloom of savage life, in the first glad impulse that took the sting out of the struggle of human life, in the first innocent joy that thrilled the human heart.

— *Thomas P. Byrnes.*

Years ago, people used to sing from one of Dr. Watts' hymns:

> "This infant was the mighty God,
> Come to be suckled and adored."

I trust the day is not far distant when they who cannot sing such a sentiment may yet be classed among the disciples of the Nazarene. Surely there are millions of Christians, looking lovingly at the Christmas picture of the little life lying in a manger, who would find it difficult to say, "This infant was the mighty God." Yet it would be the Unitarian who would say, with strongest emphasis, "Immanuel, God with us." In every birth the divine child appears. All motherhood is a divine motherhood. Every birth is holy and every mother a madonna, gazing wonderingly into the future.

Is such a conception of the incarnation less or more than the old? To Unitarians it is incomparably more.

— *M. O. Simons.*

Christmas is the festival when we seem spontaneously to live in some degree in the spirit of Jesus. The pagans at this season celebrated the victory of the sun and rejoiced in the lengthening days. The Christians later came to celebrate a miraculous birth which, they believed, had brought divine glory on earth and opportunity of salvation for men. We to-day adopt the festival with all its pagan cheer and would increase rather than diminish its Chris-

tian significance. We gladly commemorate the birth of one in whose spirit the possible beauty of all human life was revealed and who for all time proved the human and the divine to be one. Christmas has become a festival in honor of the sunshine of the human spirit. Its significance for us is that in celebrating the birth of him whose spirit was that of peace and good-will, we show that the same spirit with all its strength and beauty is possible for us also at all times and in all places.

— *Oscar B. Hawes.*

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." So runs the legend-philosophy of John. But apart from theology, is not that a good statement of the business of the Christmas-time? There is a lot of floating sentiment and suspended feeling of the warmish sort at this season of the year. The trouble is that it does not get beyond feeling and sentiment. That failure marks all our days. Our dreams and our hopes run sadly ahead of our accomplishments and, worst of all, we are prone to congratulate ourselves that we *feel* so kindly. But now comes Incarnation Day. Shall not the word indeed become flesh at this holiday time?

— *G. E. MacIlwain.*

It is very significant that the ancient church fixed upon the time of the return of the sun for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Thus was recognized the mysterious connection between the manifestation of the power of God in nature and its revelation in man. Christmas is not merely traditional or dogmatic; it has to do with living human experience. It is the dawn of the light and love of God throughout the realm of human life. Truly to celebrate the advent of Christ is to have the Christ life born within us; so that, hence-

forth, the natural expression of our religion will be "Fear not," "Be of good cheer," "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

—*Alfred Manchester.*

The spirit of Christmas is so wide in its scope as to include universal brotherhood. Our Christmas customs are the resultant of many forces. They are scraps of ideals from the tribes and nations of the past. Christmas is a survival of the festival in honor of the god Saturn among the. Romans. Thus a so-called pagan religious festival is now used to celebrate the birth of Jesus, our great master. The boar's head played a large part in English festivities and no Christmas dinner was complete without it. This takes us back to the ancient Babylonians, who, at the sun festival, sacrificed a wild boar to the god Adonis. The mistletoe was sacred to the Druids. The Christmas tree reminds us of a time when trees were worshiped and sacrifices were offered to Pomona. The Christmas gift is suggestive of the sacrifices offered to the gods to appease them.

Our Christmas festivities, therefore, amalgamate many features gathered from many forms of religion. What a lesson! Does this consideration not teach us to recognize the good there is in all the religions of the world, as well as in Christianity? Wherever the religious life manifests itself, it is the supreme effort of the human soul to feel its unity with God. Let us drop the words heathen and pagan and adopt the words brother and friend. May war, bitterness, strife, racial and religious prejudice be substituted by peace on earth among men of good-will. Thus the spirit of Christmas will mean joy to all the people of earth,—joy to the great family of God: it will mean universal sympathy, love, charity, brotherhood.

—*William S. Morgan.*

Christian doctrine may still be a matter of the Church, but the spirit of the Christ has passed beyond its walls. His teaching of the true "Superman" has become the test of all true culture and the Christ belongs to him who loves his fellow-men. No matter, therefore, how far removed we may be from the faith of the fathers or of present-day orthodoxy, we still share in the joy and the deeper, wider meaning of Christmas. We all feel our oneness with that wonderful spiritual movement of which the son of Mary is the head and heart. We would not remove one jot or one tittle from that beautiful, tender legend of Bethlehem, the shepherds and the heavenly host. Thus the Prince of Peace should have been born; thus the poet of Nazareth should have entered the world; thus his spirit has entered into our hearts. No matter even if Jesus never were born, we may heartily join in the song of the angels. "Glory be to God in the Highest and on earth peace, good will toward men," for the Christ is here.

— *G. R. Gebauer.*

On Christmas Day we commemorate the birth of the founder of Christianity. For us, who believe in the divinity of Jesus, but not in his deity, who believe that he was the "Son of God" but not "God the Son," the Christmas observance rests upon motives distinctively human. Again we read the beautiful stories of the shepherds' vision, the angels' song, and the adoration of the Magi, — stories which originated in the admiration and love of the early followers of Jesus, and which lose none of their value with our better understanding of their symbolic meaning. However perverted the record and interpretation of that wondrous life, it is still true that it marks the advent into human history of a new and higher ideal of life and character.

As the event is human, so also is the message. The Christmas bells ring out amid the competitions

of men and the strife of nations, the millennial notes of the gospel of peace on earth and good-will to men. This means that as a result of the spread of the religion of love to God and man which Jesus taught, the visions of prophets and seers and the dreams of poets and psalmists will yet be realized. As we look beyond the December blasts and see the showers of April and the blossoms of June, so through the sounds of strife and the din of war we behold the rainbow promise of peace. And so we unite with all Christendom in commemorating the birth of Jesus. In the spirit of Christmas cheer which pervades our homes, and in the joyful interchange of Christmas gifts, may we read the promise of the time when selfishness shall be no more and when men of all sects and of every nation shall gather to the light and truth of the love of God, for which the Christ-idea stands.

—*A. P. Reccord.*

FIELD NOTES

The Unitarian Church in Indianapolis, Ind., evidently believes in a religion of social helpfulness. A card catalogue is kept of the activity of its members along lines of social service. If any member is found who is not doing anything in this way, a recommendation is made. Many of our churches might well adopt such a method to the increase of their success and usefulness.

The second season of the Paragraph Pulpit work promises to be most successful. In Baltimore, Md., it is appearing in two of the most prominent dailies. In Atlanta, Ga., a contract has just been made with the *Atlanta Journal.* In McKeesport, Pa., it is being published in the *Daily News,* at the expense of the brave little church in that place. Rev. Charles E. St. John will continue the work in one of the leading Philadelphia papers this year.

After an expenditure of $1,000 last year, he is fully convinced of its effectiveness as a missionary method. In Wilmington, Del., Rev. C. A. Henderson is also using it to advantage. Rev. Bradford Leavitt, of San Francisco, Cal., is meeting with much success in his work of the Paragraph Pulpit in the daily *Call*.

Definite steps have been taken to organize a Men's League in our Unitarian churches, under the name of the "National League of Unitarian Laymen." The objects of this League are "to unite men in active and aggressive denominational and philanthropic work and civic improvement, through the agency of the Unitarian church, and to promote the organization of Men's Clubs at mission points where they do not now exist." This League will be most helpful in uniting more closely the men of the Unitarian movement and in preparing them, by such union, to more effectively take advantage of the great opportunity before the Unitarian church to-day.

A plan of much interest and having promise of much good is that of Ministerial Exchanges that has recently been arranged. The plan is to have an exchange between two ministers for a period of not less than four Sundays, at points sufficiently remote from each other to give interest and newness to the exchange. It is expected that the operation of this plan will refresh both ministers and churches.

Rev. Bradford Leavitt of San Francisco has recently completed a journey as a Billings Lecturer to the churches in Salt Lake and Ogden, Utah, Boise, Idaho; Butte, Helena, and Great Falls, Montana; Spokane, Bellingham, and Seattle, Washington. His report indicates vitality and growth in almost all of the churches visited.

Rev. Minot O. Simons of Cleveland, Ohio, will visit all the churches in the Pacific Coast Department as a Billings Lecturer in February next.

Rev. H. H. Saunderson, President of the Young People's Religious Union, is making a journey this month in the Central West and Canada.

In West Virginia, Rev. Thomas Clayton has recently made a most successful missionary journey, speaking in Charleston, Huntington, Fairmount, and Morgantown.

At the last meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association, an interesting departure was a vote authorizing the construction of a portable church. If the plan works well, it may solve the problem that confronts some of the younger churches, unable to build permanent structures and worshiping at present in unsuitable meeting places. The first of these structures will probably be used in the Meadville district, where heat and light can be provided by natural gas.

If in our church we really *mean business,* there is no reason why we should not avail ourselves of every business method to advance its interests and effect its work.

Our great lack as Unitarians is not that we have no great principles to stand for, but rather that we are too often content to merely *stand* for them, when we ought to be carrying them forward and spreading them abroad.

THE UNITARIAN CALENDAR

The Unitarian Calendar is published monthly, except July and August, by the American Unitarian Association, at 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. Single subscription, 25 cents a year.

A CHRISTMAS SUGGESTION

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SENT WITHOUT CHARGE FOR THE ASKING

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, BOSTON

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